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Law without Limit: Discipline and Young Children

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Abstract

Firstly, this paper presents a number of methods which have been shown to be effective in the control of young children. Secondly, it looks at the different types of child-rearing practices and their implications for discipline. Thirdly, the sense is further twisted by giving consideration to the views of young children concerning the various methods of adult control. Finally as the only real discipline can come from "within", the remainder of this paper is devoted to the development of the child's conscience within the context of the family, society and the spirit.

Law without Limit: Discipline and Young Children

"Hey, careful Joey! God sees everything we do, then he goes and tells Santa Claus."
(Dennis the Menace).

Introduction

Aquinas (1225-1274), like Aristotle (384-322 BC), identified the ultimate goal of human life as happiness, and they both thought that happiness could not be equated with pleasure, riches, honour, or any bodily good, but must consist in activity in accordance with virtue. Aristotle, in his ethics, introduced the concept of Voluntariness: something was voluntary if it was originated by an agent free from compulsion or error. In his moral system an important role was also played by the concept of *prohairesis* or purposive choice: this was the choice of an action as part of an overall plan of life. Aristotle's concept of the voluntary was too clumsily defined, and his concept of *prohairesis* too narrowly defined to demarcate the everyday moral choices which make up our life. While retaining Aristotle's concepts, Aquinas introduced a new one of 'intention', which filled the gap left between the two of them, and greatly facilitated moral thinking. It is worth noting that young children become aware of intentions at about the age of three (Nelson, 1980; Siegal and Peterson, 1998).

In Aquinas' system there are three types of action. There are those things which we do for their own sake, wanted as ends in themselves: for example, the pursuit of play. There are those things which we do because they are a means to an end: taking medicine in order to get better for instance. It is in these actions that we exhibit intention: we intend to achieve the end by the means. Finally, there are (perhaps unwanted) consequences and side-effects which our intentional actions bring about. These are not intentional, but merely voluntary. Voluntariness, then, is the broadest category; whatever is intentional is voluntary, but not vice-versa. Intention itself, while covering a narrower area than voluntariness, is a broader concept than Aristotle's *prohairesis*. The disciplining of young children cannot be understood without at the same time considering the moral development and the growth of that child's conscience. Methods of discipline cannot be isolated from their consequences.

This paper proposes firstly, to look at a number of methods that have been shown to be effective in the control of young children. From there it is a small step to look at the different types of child-rearing practices and their implications for discipline, and from there, to how young children themselves view adult practices in this regard. Secondly, as it is obvious that the only real discipline must come from 'within', the remainder of this paper is devoted to the development of the child's conscience within the context of the family, society and the spirit.

Methods of Control

It is in the nature of young children to attempt to do things that their adult carers do not want them to do, ask for things they cannot have, or refuse to obey their carers requests or demands. Adults are inevitably faced with the task of controlling the child's behaviour and training the child to follow some basic precepts. The methods of controlling young children can broadly be divided into four categories: Rules, Expectations, Punishment and Communication.

Rules

One element of control is the consistency of rules. This requires making clear to the child what the rules are, what the consequences are of disobeying them are, and then enforcing

them consistently. Some adult carers are very clear and consistent; others waver or are fuzzy about what they expect or will tolerate. Studies of families show that parents who are clear and consistent have children who are much less likely to be defiant or non-compliant and the same pattern can be observed in day-care centres and pre-schools. Children whose teachers are lax and inconsistent in their response to misbehaviour are more likely to misbehave (Arnold, McWilliams and Arnold, 1998). Consistency of rules does not produce 'little robots'. Children from families with consistent rules are more competent and sure of themselves and are less likely to become delinquent or show significant behaviour problems than are children from families with less consistent rules.

Expectations

A related element of adult control is the level of their expectations with respect to the child's behaviour. Is the child expected to show relatively mature behaviour, or does the adult carer feel that it is important not to expect too much, too soon? Studies of such variations show that, within limits, higher expectations are associated with better outcomes. Children whose parents make high demands on them - expecting them to help around the house or show relatively mature behaviour for their age - have higher self-esteem, show more generosity and altruism towards others, and have lower levels of aggression. Obviously, high expectations can be carried too far. It is unrealistic and counterproductive to expect a two year old to set the table for dinner or to tie his or her own shoelaces. Nevertheless, when a child is expected to be as independent and helpful as possible they gain a sense of competence that carries over into the rest of their life.

Punishment

In order to understand the process of control you must also understand the nature of punishment. Punishment is one form of discipline, one method of training and controlling, but not the only one. It is most often aimed at stopping a child doing something which is prohibited, such as writing on the wall or hitting his brother, but it may be used to 'persuade' a child to do something that he or she is resisting, such as sweeping the garden. Punishment nearly always involves something with negative consequences for the child, such as cancelling 'treats', sending the child to his or her room, to a violent verbal exchange or even spanking. Two important points emerge from the literature. Firstly, "Punishment 'works'! If you use it properly it will produce rapid changes in the behaviour of other people" (Patterson,

1975. p.19). The most important word here is ‘properly’. The most effective punishments - those that produce long term changes in a child’s behaviour without unwanted or negative side-effects - are those that are used early in some sequence of misbehaviour, with the lowest level of emotion possible and the mildest level of punishment possible. Taking a desired toy away when the child first hits a sibling with it, or consistently removing small privileges will often produce the desired results, especially if the adult is also warm, clear about the rules, and consistent. It is far less effective to wait until the sibling’s screams have reached a piercing level or that the situation has been allowed to develop in such a way that the adult weighs in with yelling, critical sarcastic comments and strong punishment. Secondly, to a considerable degree, adult carers ‘get back what they put in’ with respect to punishment. Young children learn by observation as well as by doing, so they learn the adults’ ways of coping with stress and their forms of punishment. Yelling at children to try and make them stop doing something, for example, may bring a brief change in behaviour (which reinforces the adult for yelling!) but the child will, by copying, be much more likely to yell at others in the future.

Communication

A fourth important dimension of the family system is the quality of the communication between the adult carer and the child. Two things about such communication make a difference for the child. Firstly, the amount and richness of the language used and secondly, the amount of conversation and suggestions from the child that the adult encourages. In other words, listening is as important as talking! Listening means something more than merely saying “yes, yes” periodically when the child talks. It also means conveying to the child the sense that what he says is worth listening to, that he has ideas, that his ideas are important and should be considered in family decisions. In general, children from families with open communication are seen as more emotionally or socially mature (Baumrind, 1971; Bell & Bell, 1982). Open communication may also be important for the functioning of the family as a unit. The type of family interaction is also important for discipline.

Family Types - Implications For Discipline.

Baumrind (1973) looked at combinations of the various dimensions of parenting which mostly repeat the points raised above: firstly, warmth, or nurturance, secondly, the level of expectations, which she called “maturity demands”, thirdly, the clarity and consistency of

rules, which she referred to as “controls” and fourthly, the communication between the adult carer and the child. Baumrind says that there are three specific combinations of these four characteristics which give rise to three types of family organisation. Firstly, the *Permissive* Style is high in nurturance but low in maturity demands, control and communication. Secondly, the *Authoritarian* Style is high in control and maturity demands but low in nurturance and communication. And thirdly, the *Authoritative* Style is high in all four.

Macoby and Martin (1983) extended Baumrind’s category system proposing a model that has been hugely influential. They emphasised two dimensions: firstly, the degree of *Control* or *Demand,* and secondly, the level of *Acceptance* or *Responsiveness*. The intersection of these two creates four parenting types, three of which are very similar to Baumrind’s, the fourth being a *Neglecting* Style.

FOUR TYPES OF PARENTING:

		Level of Acceptance/Responsiveness	
Level Of Control Or Demand		High	Low
	High	AUTHORITATIVE Reciprocal Relationships	AUTHORITARIAN Power Assertive
	Low	INDULGENT Permissive	NEGLECTING Uninvolved

After: Macoby and Martin (1983)

The Authoritarian Type

These parents feel that they have “standards”. They believe in controlling their children. They place a high emphasis on obedience, respect for authority and order. They are difficult to please. Children growing up in such families do less well at school, are typically less skilled with peers, and have lower self-esteem than children from other types of families (Baumrind, 1991; Macoby and Martin, 1983). Some of these children appear subdued; others may show high levels of aggressiveness or other indications of being out of control. Which of these two outcomes occurs may depend in part on how skilfully the parents use various disciplinary techniques. Patterson (1996) finds that the “out of control” child is most likely to come from a family in which the parents are authoritarian by inclination but lack the skills to enforce the limits or rules they set.

The Permissive Type

Children growing up with indulgent or permissive parents, who are tolerant and warm but exercise little authority, also show some negative outcomes. They do slightly less well in school in adolescence, and they are likely to be aggressive - particularly if the parents are specifically permissive towards aggressiveness - and to be somewhat immature in their behaviour with peers and in school. They are less likely to take responsibility and are less independent (Macoby and Martin, 1983).

The Authoritative Type

The most consistently positive outcomes have been associated with the authoritative parenting pattern, in which the parents are high in both control and warmth, setting clear limits, expecting and reinforcing socially mature behaviour, and at the same time responding to the child's individual needs. [Note that parents who use this style of parenting do not let the child rule the roost]. Authoritative parents are quite willing to discipline the child appropriately if the child misbehaves. They are less likely to use physical punishment than are authoritarian parents, preferring instead to use time out or other mild punishments, but it is important to understand that such parents are not "wishy-washy". Children reared in such families typically show higher self esteem. They are more independent but at the same time are more likely to comply with parental requests, and they may show more altruistic behaviour as well. They are self confident and achievement orientated in school and get better grades in elementary school, high school, and college (eg: Crockenberg and Litman, 1990: Dornbusch, Ritter, Liederman, Roberts and Fraleigh, 1987; Steinberg, Elmaen and Mounts, 1989; Weiss and Schwarz, 1996). In late adolescence, they are more likely to use postconventional (principled) moral reasoning (Boyes and Allen, 1993).

The Neglecting Type

The most consistently negative outcomes are associated with the fourth parenting pattern, the neglecting or uninvolved type. Insecurely attached children often suffer from the "psychological unavailability" of the mother. The mother may be depressed or may be

overwhelmed by problems in her life, or she simply may not have made any deep emotional connection with the child. Whatever the reason, such children continue to show disturbances in their relationships with peers and with adults for many years. At adolescence for example, youngsters from neglecting families are more impulsive and antisocial and much less achievement orientated in school (Block, 1971, Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg and Dornbush, 1991; Pulkkinen, 1982). Lack of parental monitoring appears to be critical; children and teens whose neglecting parents show poor monitoring are far more likely to become delinquent and to engage in sexual activity in early adolescence (Patterson, Read, and Dishion, 1992; Pittman and Chase-Lansdale, 2001).

Disciplinary Techniques and Moral Development.

Hoffman (1970) reviewed the child-rearing literature to see whether the disciplinary techniques that parents actually use have any effect on the moral development of their children. Three major approaches were found. The first, *Love Withdrawal,* was defined as withholding attention, affection, or approval after a child misbehaves or, in other words, creating an anxiety over a loss of love. The second is *Power Assertion* where an adults' superior power to control the child's behaviour is made use of (includes techniques such as forceful commands, physical restraint, spankings and withdrawal of privileges and other techniques that may generate fear, anger or resentment). Thirdly, *Induction* is a technique whereby explanations are given to the child as to why a behaviour is wrong and should be changed. This is done by emphasising how it affects other people and it often involves suggestions as to how the child might undo any harm done.

Although only a limited number of child rearing studies had been conducted by 1970, their results suggested that neither *Love Withdrawal* nor *Power Assertion* were particularly effective and that *Induction* seemed to foster the development of all three aspects of morality - moral emotions, moral reasoning and moral behaviour (Hoffman, 1970). The following table gives the number of child-rearing studies which Hoffman found in each category.

Child Rearing Studies And Disciplinary Strategies

	Number of studies showing the following types of discipline:		
	Power Assertion	Love Withdrawal	Induction
Direction of relationship between parent's use of a disciplinary strategy and children's moral maturity	+7 -32	+8 -11	+38 -6

After Hoffman, 1970.

Recent research indicates that *Induction* can be highly effective with two to five year olds, reliably promoting sympathy and compassion for others as well as a willingness to comply with parental requests. In contrast, the use of such high-intensity power-assertive tactics as becoming angry and physically restraining or spanking the child is associated with and seems to promote non-compliance, defiance, and a lack of concern for others (Crockenberg and Litman, 1990; Kochanska et al, 2002; Kochanska and Murray, 2000, 2002; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow and King, 1979; Zahn-Waxler et al, 1979. 1992).

Why is inductive discipline so effective? Hoffman (1970) cites several reasons. Firstly, it provides children with cognitive standards (or rationales) that they can use to evaluate their conduct. Secondly, this form of discipline helps children to sympathise with others (Krevens and Gibbs, 1996) and allows parents to talk about such moral affects as pride, guilt, and shame, which are not easily discussed with a child who is made emotionally insecure by love withdrawal or angry and resentful by power assertive techniques. And thirdly, parents who use inductive discipline are likely to explain to the child (a) what he or she should have done when tempted to violate a prohibition, and (b) what he or she can now do to make up for the transgression. So induction may be an effective method of moral socialisation because it calls attention to the cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of morality and may help the child integrate them.

Finally, it is important to note that few, if any, parents are totally inductive, love orientated, or power assertive in their approach to discipline; most make at least some use of all three disciplinary techniques. In fact, Hoffman (2000) stresses that a little bit of power assertion is useful now and then, as long as it does not arouse too much fear, because it can motivate a child to pay close attention to the inductive component of discipline. As Hoffman (2000) puts it, the winning formula for effective discipline is "a blend of frequent inductions, occasional power assertions, and a lot of affection"
(This prescription is very similar to the "rationale and mild punishment from a warm disciplinarian" treatment that Parke (1977) found most effective in laboratory studies of resistance to temptation undertaken with young children)

In yet another twist, Kochanska (1993, 1997) proposes that the kind of parenting most likely to foster moral internalisation depends on a child's temperament. Some children are fearful while others are not. Kochanska says that fearful children respond most favourably to gentle forms of discipline that de-emphasise power assertion. While with fearless children she proposes that parents should adopt a warm, sensitive approach which encourages a strong attachment between parent and child. Her view is that a secure and mutually positive relationship makes the cost of bad behaviour too high for the child. In other words, this mutually beneficial relationship fosters committed compliance from the child, who wants to co-operate with and please his parents.

The "Direction of Effects Issue" - A Young Child's Concern for Others.

Does induction promote moral maturity? Or do morally more mature children elicit more inductive forms of discipline?

Hoffman (1975) says that parents exert far more control over their children's behaviour than children exert over parents. He believes that parental use of inductive discipline promotes moral maturity rather than the other way round. However, children can influence the discipline they receive. A child who has already developed a sense of committed compliance as a toddler may have come to view himself as a 'good' or 'moral' person and will respond well to induction and be treated that way (Kochanska, 2002). Another child who frequently 'acts up' and defies his parents will often elicit more coercive (and less effective!) forms of discipline over time (Stoolmiller, 2001).

Although most youngsters respond favourably to inductive discipline, it is becoming quite clear that no one disciplinary style works best for all children and that the most effective approaches are those that are carefully tailored to the child's attributes and the situation at hand (Grusec, Goodnow and Kuczynski, 2000). So moral socialisation at home is double sided. Although inductive discipline often does promote moral maturity, children who respond more favourably to this rational, relatively non-punitive approach are the ones who are most likely to be treated this way by their parents. Other investigators have wondered whether Hoffman's conclusions about the effectiveness of inductive discipline might not be overstated. For example, inductive discipline used by white middle-class mothers is consistently associated with measures of children's moral maturity; however, the same findings don't always hold for fathers or for parents from other socio-economic backgrounds (Brody and Schaffer, 1982; Grusec and Goodnow, 1994).

A young child's concern for others is measured directly by the amount of altruism that that child has and the following table gives the correlation for various types of altruistic behaviour experienced with toddlers.

Mothers' reports of the proportion of times their toddlers displayed sympathy, prosocial behaviour, aggression or personal distress to others' distress that they did not cause.

Toddler Reaction	13 - 15 months	18- 20 months	23-25 months
Sympathy	.09	.10	.25
Pro-social Behaviour	.09	.21	.49
Aggressive Behaviour	.01	.01	.03
Personal Distress	.15	.12	.07

After: Zahn-Waxler et al. (1992).

Altruistic parents tend to raise altruistic children (London,1970; Oliner and Oliner, 1988) while partially committed altruistic parents do not (Rosenhan, 1970; Clary and Snyder, 1991). Parents teach by example and parental reactions to their child's harm-doing to others also plays an important part. Mothers of less compassionate toddlers react to harm-doing in punitive or forceful ways, whereas mothers of compassionate toddlers rely more heavily on non-punitive, affective explanations in which they display their sympathy for the victim, persuade the child to accept responsibility for his or her harm-doing, and often urge him or

her to direct some sort of comforting or helpful response towards the victim (Zahn-Waxter, Radke-Yarrow, and King, 1979; Zahn-Waxler et al, 1992)

There are probably several reasons why rational affectively orientated discipline that is heavy on reasoning might inspire children to become more altruistic. First, it encourages the child to assume another person's perspective (role playing) and to experience that person's distress (empathy training). It also teaches the child to perform helpful or comforting acts that make both the self and the other person feel better. And last but not least, these altruistic responses might convince children that they can be 'caring' or 'helpful' people. This in turn fosters a pro-social self concept that they may try to live up to by performing other acts of kindness in the future. Parents who continue to rely on rational, non-punitive disciplinary techniques in which they regularly display sympathy and concern for others tend to raise children who are sympathetic and self-sacrificing, whereas frequent use of forceful and punitive discipline appears to inhibit altruism and leads to the development of self-centred values (Brody and Shaffer, 1982; Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998; Hastings et al, 2000; Krevans and Gibbs, 1996).

A Child's View of Discipline

What do children think about various disciplinary strategies? Do they feel that physical punishment and love withdrawal are ineffective methods of promoting moral restraint? Would they favour inductive techniques, or perhaps prefer that their parents adopt more permissive attitudes towards transgression?

Siegal and Cowen (1984) addressed these issues by asking children and adolescents between the ages of four to eighteen to listen to stories describing different kinds of misdeeds and to evaluate strategies that mothers had used to discipline these antics. Five kinds of transgressions were described. Firstly, simple disobedience (the child refused to clean his room). Secondly, causing physical harm to others (the child punched a playmate). Thirdly, causing physical harm to oneself (ignoring an order not to touch a hot stove). Fourthly, causing psychological harm to others (making fun of a physically disabled person). And fifthly, causing physical damage (breaking a lamp while messing around).

The four disciplinary techniques on which mothers were said to have relied were: (a) *Induction* (reasoning with the culprit by pointing out the harmful consequences of his or her

actions). (b) *Physical Punishment* (striking the child). (c) *Withdrawal of love* (wanting nothing more to do with the child). (d) *Permissive non-intervention* (ignoring the incident and assuming that the child would learn from mistakes).

Each participant heard 20 stories that resulted from pairing each of the four maternal disciplinary strategies with each of the five kinds of transgressions. After listening to or reading each story, the participant indicated whether the mother's approach to the problem was "very wrong", "wrong", "half right/half wrong", "right" or "very right".

Although the perceived appropriateness of each disciplinary technique varied somewhat across transgressions, the most interesting findings overall were that firstly, *Induction* was the most preferred discipline strategy for participants of all ages (even pre-schoolers). Secondly, *Physical Punishment* was the next most favourably evaluated technique. *Love Withdrawal* and *Permissiveness* were favourably evaluated by no group. Most interesting of all was that the four to nine year olds in the sample favoured any form of discipline, even *Love Withdrawal*, over a *Permissive* attitude on the mother's part (which they viewed as "wrong" or "very wrong"). These young children were disturbed by stories in which youngsters were generally free to do their own thing, largely unencumbered by adult constraints. What these children wanted was what Montessori calls "Freedom within limits".

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD'S CONSCIENCE

Freud's psychosexual theory specifies that three components of personality - the "id", "ego", and "superego" - develop and gradually become integrated in a series of stages.

The "id" is all that is present at birth. Its sole function is to satisfy inborn biological instincts, and it will try to do so immediately. If you think about it, young infants do seem to be all "id". When hungry or wet, they simply fuss and cry until their needs are met, and they are not known for their patience! The "ego" is the conscious, rational component of the personality that reflects the child's emerging abilities to perceive, learn, remember, and reason. Its function is to find realistic means of gratifying the instincts, as when a hungry toddler, remembering how he gets food, seeks out his mother and says "biscuit". As their egos mature, children become better at controlling their irrational "ids" and finding realistic ways to gratify needs on their own. However, realistic solutions to needs are not always acceptable, as a hungry three year old who is caught stealing biscuits between meals may soon find out! The

final component of personality, or “superego”, is the seat of conscience. It develops between the ages of three and six as children internalise (take on as their own) the moral values and standards of their parents (Freud, 1933). Once the superego emerges, children do not need an adult to tell them they have been good or bad; they are now aware of their own transgressions and will feel guilty or ashamed of their unethical conduct. So the superego is truly an internal censor. It insists that the ego find socially acceptable outlets for the id’s undesirable impulses.

Cognitive-developmentalists, on the other hand, study morality by charting the development of moral reasoning - the thinking children display when deciding whether various acts are right or wrong. According to cognitive theorists, both cognitive growth and social experiences help children to develop progressively richer understandings of the meanings of rules, laws, and interpersonal obligations. As children acquire these new understandings, they are said to progress through an invariant sequence of moral stages, each of which evolves from and replaces its predecessor and represents a more advanced or “mature” perspective on moral issues.

Piaget’s early work in Switzerland on children’s moral judgements focused on two aspects of moral reasoning. Firstly, he studied children’s developing respect for rules by playing marbles with children aged five to thirteen. He asked such questions as “Must everyone obey this rule?” or “Can these rules be changed?” Secondly he studied children’s conceptions of justice and in so doing he gave them moral decision stories to ponder. For example after the story he would ask: “Which child is naughtier? Why?” “How should the naughtier child be punished?” He thus formulated his stage theory of moral development. In the first stage, the pre-moral period, Piaget said that pre-school children showed little concern or awareness of rules. In a game of marbles, these pre-moral children do not play systematically with the intent of winning. Instead, they seem to make up their own rules, and they think the point of the game is to take turns and have fun. In the next stage, that of moral realism, Piaget said that between the ages of five and ten children develop a strong respect for rules. And finally, in the stage of moral relativism, Piaget said that by the age of ten or eleven most children consider that social rules are arbitrary agreements that can be challenged and even changed with the consent of the people they govern.

It is true that younger children around the world are more likely than older ones to display such aspects of morality as a belief in immanent justice or a tendency to emphasise consequences more than intentions when judging how wrong an act is (Jose, 1990; Lapsley,

1996). In addition, the maturity of children's moral judgements is related to such indications of cognitive development as IQ and role-taking skills (Ambron and Irwin, 1975; Lapsley, 1996). There is even some support for Piaget's "peer participation" hypothesis; popular children who often take part in peer-group activities and who assume positions of leadership tend to make mature moral judgements (Bear and Rys, 1994; Keasey, 1971). Nevertheless, there is ample reason to believe that Piaget's theory clearly underestimates the moral capacities of pre-school children. This was to some extent due to a flaw in his research design. He confounded intentions and consequences by asking whether a person who caused little harm with a bad intent was naughtier than one who caused a larger amount of harm while having good intentions. He also made information about the consequences of an act much clearer than information about the actor's intentions. This tended to confuse his young subjects and they thus gave the answers he was expecting.

Kohlberg (1963, 1984; Colby and Kohlberg, 1987) has refined and extended Piaget's theory of moral development. Each stage of his concept represents a particular perspective, or method of thinking, about moral dilemmas, rather than a particular type of moral decision.

Level One: Pre-conventional Morality views rules as truly external rather than internal. The child conforms to rules imposed by authority figures to avoid punishment or obtain personal rewards. Morality is self-serving. What is right is what one can get away with or what is personally satisfying. Level one is divided into two sub-stages:- 'Punishment and Obedience Orientation' and 'Naïve Hedonism'.

(Stage 1) *Punishment and obedience orientation*. Here the goodness or badness of an act depends on its consequences. The child will obey authorities to avoid punishment, but may not consider an act wrong if it will not be detected and punished. The greater the harm done or the more severe the punishment is, the greater the 'badness' of the act.

(Stage 2) *Naïve Hedonism.* Here the person conforms to the rules in order to gain rewards or satisfy personal objectives. There is some concern for the perspective of others, but other-orientated behaviours are ultimately motivated by the hope of benefiting in return. "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" is the guiding philosophy.

Level Two: Conventional Morality views the individual as striving to obey rules and social norms in order to win others' approval or to maintain social order. Social praise and the

avoidance of blame have now replaced tangible rewards and punishments as motivators of ethical conduct. The perspectives of other people are clearly recognised and given careful consideration. Level two is also divided into two sub-stages:- 'Good Boy/Girl Orientation' and 'Social Order Morality.'

(Stage 3) "Good Boy" or "Good Girl" orientation views moral behaviour as that which pleases, helps, or is approved of by others. Actions are evaluated on the basis of the actor's intent. "He means well" is a common expression of moral approval at this stage. The primary objective is to be thought of as a "good" person.

(Stage 4) Social order morality is where the individual considers the perspectives of the generalised other - that is, the will of society as reflected in law. Now what is right is what conforms to the rules of legal authority. The reason for conforming is not a fear of punishment, but a belief that rules and laws maintain a social order that is worth preserving.

Level Three - Post-conventional Morality is Kohlberg's term for the fifth and sixth stages of moral reasoning, in which moral judgements are based on social contracts and democratic law (Stage 5) or on universal principles of ethics and justice (Stage 6).

It must be realised that most adults never reach stages five or six and that cognitive growth, by itself, is not sufficient to guarantee moral development. In order to move beyond the pre-conventional level of moral reasoning, children must be exposed to persons or situations that introduce cognitive disequilibrium - that is, conflicts between existing moral concepts and new ideas that will force them to re-evaluate their viewpoints. So, like Piaget, Kohlberg believed that both cognitive development and relevant social experiences underlie the growth of moral reasoning.

Many of the criticisms of Kohlberg's theory have centred on the possibilities that it is biased against certain groups of people; that it underestimates the moral sophistication of young children, and that it says much about moral reasoning but little about moral affect and moral behaviour. Even six year olds are quite capable of evaluating laws as just or unjust based on their potential for infringing on individual rights and freedoms and show little evidence of the strict "punishment and obedience" or "naïve hedonism" orientations that Kohlberg sees as characteristic of young children (Helwig and Jasiobedzka, 2001)

In recent years, a number of investigators have taken a new look at the early development of "conscience" from a social learning or socialisation perspective (eg: Kochanska, Coy and Murray, 2001; Kochanska and Murray, 2000; Labile and Thompson, 2000, 2002) and their findings are quite revealing.

It seems that children may begin to form a conscience as toddlers if they are securely attached to warm and responsive parents who have shared many positive experiences with them, have often co-operated with their wishes during joint play, and who may resolve the many conflicts that all parents have with a wilful toddler by remaining firm but calm as they openly express their feelings, evaluating the toddlers behaviour as wrong and explaining why he or she should feel uneasy about his conduct. By establishing rules in rational, non-threatening ways, clearly evaluating the child's transgressions and working to establish mutual understandings about what is acceptable and what is not, parents give children a rule system to internalise.

And within the context of such a warm, secure mutually responsive relationship (rather than a fear provoking one), toddlers are likely to display committed compliance - an orientation in which they are, firstly, highly motivated to embrace the parent's agenda and to comply with her rules and requests, secondly, sensitive to a parent's emotional signals indicating whether they have done right or wrong, and thirdly, beginning to internalise these parental reactions to their triumphs and transgressions while coming to experience the pride, shame, and guilt that will help them to evaluate and regulate their own conduct (Kochanska, Coy and Murray, 2001; Kochanska et al, 2002; Labile and Thompson, 2000).

By contrast, aloof and impatient parents who rely more on power assertion to resolve conflicts and who have shared fewer mutually positive experiences with a toddler are likely to promote situational compliance - generally non-oppositional behaviour that stems more from parents' power to control the child's conduct than from the child's eagerness to co-operate or comply.

Evidence is rapidly emerging to support these newer ideas about early development of conscience. Consider, for example, that two to two and a half year old toddlers who have mutually responsive relationships with mothers who resolve conflicts with them calmly and rationally are more likely to resist temptations to touch prohibited toys at age three (Labile and Thompson, 2002) and continue to show more signs of having a strong internalised conscience (e.g. a willingness to comply with rules when adults are not present; clear signs of guilt when they think they have transgressed) at ages four and a half to six than do age-mates

whose earlier mother-toddler relationships had been less warm and mutually responsive (Kochanska and Murray, 2000). What's more, boys who show committed compliance to their mothers at 33 months soon come to view themselves as "good" or "moral" individuals (Kochanska, 2002) - a finding which may help explain why such children are more inclined to co-operate with other adult authority figures (e.g. fathers, day-care providers, experimenters) compared to those whose compliance with their mother is less consistent and more situational in nature (Feldman and Klein, 2003; Kochanska, Coy and Murray, 2001).

LAW WITHOUT LIMIT

The child's pursuits for their own sake and as a means to an end often give rise to unwanted side effects. These side-effects have to be controlled through discipline. Inner discipline is the result of the moral development of the child. There are four main methods of enforcing discipline - rules, expectations, punishment and communication. These methods are exhibited in varying combinations and strengths in four different family settings - authoritarian, permissive, authoritative and neglecting. These organisational strategies can equally well be applied to other pre-school situations. The moral development of the child is enhanced by "a blend of frequent inductions, occasional power assertions, and a lot of affection" (Hoffman, 2000) and the temperament of the child also has to be taken into account (Kochaska, 1993, 1997).

Young children's concern for others is largely the result of the example set by the adults around them and the way in which they are brought up. Rational, affectively orientated discipline that is heavy on reasoning is the way to go (Zahn-Waxler et al, 1992). Young children do not like adult carers who fail to correct their mistakes and misdemeanours. They view such adults as abdicating their responsibilities (Siegal and Cowen, 1984).

The development of the child's conscience can be viewed in many ways. However, Freud's psychoanalytic approach provides a sharp contrast to the developmental theories of Piaget and Kohlberg and the social learning perspective adds yet another lens. However, it is now evident that young children develop a sense of "right" and "wrong" at a much younger age than had been previously thought.

Our conscience comes from relationships and all our relationships of affection, authority and dependence are permeated by weakness, tyranny and distrust, from our earliest days.

Authority, like every other human value, is in constant need of discipline. To have power and authority, no matter how worthy of reverence through experience or by virtue of mission, and no matter how fascinating (through press, radio, television, eloquence, daring or talent) is something that needs to be watched. Power is only redeemed by service to others. It cannot be a pretence of service, which makes use of kindness to hold others in its power psychologically - it has to be genuine where the leader becomes the one who serves. In this sense adult carers are there to serve children and not the other way round. However, in order that these children learn to serve others themselves they have to know that there is a force greater than themselves. They have to know that there is an "other" and of course the first "other" that a person knows is his or her own mother. Nothing has a deeper influence in life than the relationship between parent and child. It can never be undone. We are always the children of our parents. And it is in the family that the way to the "other" begins.

The world's religions have long recognised this. They have all portrayed salvation through discipline. However, they do not all portray morality as being driven by conscience. For example, the Hindus and the Buddhists base their beliefs on being re-born after death on a higher or lower plane according to the law of Karma which depends on the actions of a person's life. This doctrine implies that mankind can take the wrong way, but not that this is ingratitude or an offence against love.

The doctrine of Karma states that good conduct brings a pleasant and happy result and creates a tendency towards similar good acts, while bad conduct brings an evil context for the moral life of the individual. Within physical reality, the dynamic of Karma is reflected in "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction". A personalised statement of Karma would be "You receive from the world what you give to the world". For example, a personality that takes advantage of others creates an imbalance of energy that must be righted by the experience of being taken advantage of by others. If that cannot be accomplished within the lifetime of this personality, another of its soul's personalities in a future life will experience being taken advantage of by other people. If that personality does not understand that the experience of being taken advantage of by others is the effect of a previous cause, and that this experience is bringing to completion an impersonal process, it will react from a personal point of view rather than from the point of view of its soul. It may become angry, for example, or vengeful or depressed. It may lash out, or grow cynical or withdraw into sorrow. Each of these responses creates Karma, another imbalance of energy which, in turn, must be balanced. In this way, one Karmic debt has been paid, so to speak, but another, or others, has

been created. This of course puts a completely different slant on our children's behaviour and our own. Thus from an Eastern perspective the concept of conscience, in the Western sense, is alien for Karma is not viewed as a moral dynamic. Rather morality is seen as the construct of human beings. The Universe is not a judge!

Many view the commandments of religion, whichever one it may be, as a burden imposed from outside. Such attitudes are often the result of an education where the good is too strongly emphasised as a system of well defined precepts; of a general atmosphere where too much stress is laid on the extrinsic "must" (possibly the result of Authoritarian Parenting) and too little confidence placed in the intrinsic and spontaneous sense of values in both pupils and educators. Anchored in the nature of mankind are the most profound and vital values for his or her very survival. Honesty, reverence for life, material fidelity, respect for others are all precepts that flow from men and women acting in a social world. Human beings who are arrogant and selfish act against the social code which is for the benefit of all.

We must always remember that every effort at adaptation bears the stamp of a certain type of society at a given epoch. Elements which are conditioned by their times and elements which are perpetually valid are always interwoven. There is always a growth and insight into good and evil, into the actual adaptation of eternally valid rules. This is not to deny that there is a really authoritative rule and government in a real society. This interpretation is not isolated from our own sense of values, from that organ of perception for the good by which each one is personally led - conscience. Men and women have within them a living sense of what they ought to do.

Commandments and conscience interpret the same values. We should be very much mistaken if we tried to make our conscience a purely private matter, our own special secret, without any links with the community. This would estrange human beings from each other. It would be inhuman. It is therefore obviously a mistake to affirm, as one sometimes hears, that in the "old days" men and women lived by the commandments (they did what they did because they had to) while now they live by their conscience (they now do good freely). Even in the past men and women did not act without reference to their conscience, and even at present they do not act without reference to the commands of the community. The two go together.

The whole source and purpose of Christian law is love. The ten commandments, the first three as well as the last seven, are comprised in this. Here they are given their profoundest

meaning: Love of God, Love of Man. We are left therefore with one commandment - LOVE. Love itself is full of divine commands. The commandment of love is beyond human force. Self preservation and self interest often remain our profoundest motives, deeper than our love. Nonetheless, we must love our neighbour “as ourselves”, that is, with the same energy that we put into self preservation. Hence the law of love knows no limits.

“Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth” (1 Jn 3: 18)

No one can define exactly what it means to be good to other human beings, so that one can say contentedly, yes, I have done it. Yes, I have given it to others and imbued my children with it. This is a task with which one is never done. It is a gift for which we must always long for more. There is never enough.

Love is the law without limit.

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